Access
News on WorkSafeBC products, programs, and services
September 2006

Help is close by with Teleclaim

Workers will now be able to submit claims by phone

At WorkSafeBC, we understand that a workplace injury can be extremely stressful — for workers, their families, and employers. That's why we're introducing Teleclaim, a new service designed to streamline the reporting process for injured workers.

Because it isn't routine for workers to fill out injury reports, they often leave out key pieces of information, which results in delays or confusion — and can add to claim costs. For workers, the confusion can increase the level of stress. For employers, the confusion reduces administrative efficiency. Teleclaim will improve the interaction for everyone involved by eliminating initial paperwork for injured workers.

Injured workers will speak to one of our knowledgeable customer service representatives (CSRs) who will complete the injury report from information supplied by workers over the phone. The flow of information will be two-way. During the phone call, WorkSafeBC CSRs will provide information to injured workers on the claims process, workers' responsibilities, and the need to keep in touch with their employer for return-to-work planning.

Employers will continue to have the assurance of documentation through their own submission of workplace injury reports, which they still must submit.

Teleclaim is coming to Vancouver Island on October 2nd, to the B.C. Interior in early 2007, and to the entire province in the spring of 2007. The new contact number for this service is **1 888 WORKERS (1 888 967 5377)**.

For more information, please visit **WorkSafeBC.com**.

Lower rates projected for 2007

Next year, most employers will pay lower rates for their workers' compensation insurance. The projected 2007 average base rate is $1.71 per $100 of assessable payroll, compared to $1.90 in 2006.

This is relatively good news for B.C. employers and reflects recent years' trends of stable injury rates and lower duration of injuries. While injury costs are expected to stay on a declining track, it's important to note that employers' rates are being protected by very strong investment returns.

"Sound financial management of WorkSafeBC's investment portfolio is keeping employer rates lower than they would otherwise be," says WorkSafeBC chief financial officer Sid Fattedad.

Overall, approximately 68 percent of employers will see a reduction in their 2007 base rate, 10 percent will see their rates remain unchanged, and 22 percent of employers' rates will increase.

Rate decreases are projected for sawmills, paper mills, industrial and residential construction, road construction, general trucking, public schools, hotels, supermarkets, general retail, universities, restaurants, and local governments. Rates are expected to remain virtually unchanged for electrical utilities and forestry, while increases are forecast for gas utilities, department stores, ferry services, and various business services, such as consulting, accounting, and clerical labour supply.

Preliminary rates are subject to approval by the WorkSafeBC Board of Directors in the fall.

To find out more about the proposed rates in your industry, visit **WorkSafeBC.com**.

Incentives for safety

More employers across the province can now take advantage of expanding financial incentives for good safety management.

The incentives are part of the Partners in Injury Prevention and Disability Management Program, or Partners Program, for short. This voluntary, industry-driven program assists employers to create management systems that promote health and safety and help injured workers make an early, safe return to meaningful work.

Under the program, employers register with a certifying partner — typically the safety association for their industry — and implement standardized occupational health and safety (OH&S) programs and/or return-to-work (RTW) programs. If the programs pass an audit, employers can apply for a Certificate of Recognition (COR) and become eligible to receive a rebate on their WorkSafeBC premiums.

Employers with CORs are eligible for significant rebates on their WorkSafeBC premiums. Employers registering with the Partners Program are eligible for a five percent rebate for an OH&S COR. In the near future, an additional two percent rebate will also be available for those who obtain a RTW COR. Employers with both CORs will be automatically enrolled in the Performance Management Program, which will provide an additional rebate of up to eight percent for achieving significant safety improvements.

For more information on the Partners Program, visit **WorkSafeBC.com** or e-mail **partners.program@worksafebc.com**.

Maximum wage rate to increase

The maximum wage rate and the maximum coverage for Personal Optional Protection (POP) insurance are increasing, effective January 1, 2007.

The maximum wage rate — that is, the maximum insurable earnings per worker or active shareholder for the year — will increase to $64,400 per worker in 2007, from $62,400 in 2006, while the maximum allowable POP coverage will increase to $5,366 per month from $5,200.

Policy amendment affects worker benefits

WorkSafeBC recently amended a policy that affects workers who were granted permanent disability benefits before June 30, 2002. Under the amendment, these workers will be compensated for their permanent disabilities based on 75 percent of their gross earnings — in some cases, for life.

Since June 30, 2002, these workers had been entitled to compensation based on 90 percent of their net earnings until age 65. A recent judicial review has resulted in an amendment to that policy, and has re-established the benefit provisions that were in place prior to June 30, 2002, retroactive to October 16, 2002.

WorkSafeBC is now reassessing the claims of workers whose entitlement is affected by the amended policy. In the weeks ahead, a team — with extensive expertise in the handling of claims — will be available to assist these workers.

For more information, visit **WorkSafeBC.com**, click on "Regulation & Policy," then look for "Board of Directors' 2006 decisions" under "Policy and Regulation decisions."

NAOSHWeek 2006 winners

Sixteen organizations in B.C. were recognized for their outstanding promotion of workplace health and safety in this year's North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week from April 30 to May 6, 2006. NAOSHWeek is an annual event designed to raise awareness of workplace health and safety issues.

The 2006 winners are:

Best Overall - Capital Regional District: Pollard Banknote Ltd. (tie)

Best New Entry - Victoria Shipyards Ltd./Esquimalt Graving Dock (Public Works Canada)

Most Innovative - Pollard Banknote Ltd.

Best Presentation of Theme -
Canadian Forces Base, 19 Wing, Comox
Capital Regional District
Greater Vancouver Regional District
Victoria Airport Authority
Victoria Shipyards Ltd./Esquimalt Graving Dock (Public Works Canada)

Construction- Vancouver Shipyards Ltd.

Federally Regulated Agencies - Victoria Shipyards Ltd./Esquimalt Graving Dock (Public Works Canada)

Forestry - K & C Silviculture Ltd.

General Industry - Capital Regional District

Health/Social Services - Oak Bay Lodge

Manufacturing - Pollard Banknote Ltd.

Marine - Seaspan International Ltd.

Municipalities - City of Chilliwack; City of Vancouver (tie)

Provincial/Crown Corporations - BC Legislative Assembly

Small Business - Sylvan Vale Nursery

Tourism/Hospitality - Canadian Hotel Income Properties (CHIP Hospitality)

Transportation of Goods - Rempel Bros. Concrete Ltd.

Winner: Participation Award - Kohler Canada Company

Access

Access is published by the Communications Services Department of WorkSafeBC — the Workers' Compensation Board of B.C.
This newsletter is also available electronically on the WorkSafeBC web site at www.worksafebc.com/publications/newsletters/access/.

Look for the next issue in December 2006.

WORK SAFE
WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Communications Services
WorkSafeBC
PO Box 5350 Stn Terminal
Vancouver BC V6B 5L5